UNITED NATIONS **A**

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/53/114
24 April 1998
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

Fifty-third session
Item 113 (c) of the preliminary list*

HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS: HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATIONS AND REPORTS OF SPECIAL RAPPORTEURS AND REPRESENTATIVES

Letter dated 23 April 1998 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to draw your attention to the statement issued on 21 April 1998 by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union regarding the withdrawal of the United Nations human rights enquiry team from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under item 113 (c) of the preliminary list.

(Signed) John WESTON
Permanent Representative of the
United Kingdom of Great Britain and
Northern Ireland to the United Nations

* A/53/50.

ANNEX

[Original: English]

Statement issued on 21 April 1998 by the Presidency of the European Union on the withdrawal of the United Nations human rights enquiry team from the Democratic Republic of the Congo

We deeply regret the circumstances that have necessitated the decision of the United Nations Secretary-General to withdraw the United Nations enquiry team that has been investigating alleged human rights violations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since 1993. The European Union has consistently urged the Congolese authorities to ensure the fullest cooperation with the enquiry team. Despite some improvements, the team has never enjoyed full cooperation. The recent detention of a member of the enquiry team and the serious intimidation of witnesses to whom the team has spoken are unacceptable. We fully endorse the decision by the Secretary-General to withdraw the team. We do so with considerable regret, as we believe a thorough and impartial investigation into human rights violations could make a valuable contribution to long-term stability, security and sustainable development in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region as a whole.